

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA NIACT IMMEDIATE

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TAGS: PFOR OCON

SUBJ: QUITO CONFERENCE ON CUBA

DEPT INFO EMBASSIES ALL OAS CAPITALS

1. THIS EVENING FOREIGN MINISTER SCHACHT ASKED ME WHAT ATTITUDE
US WOULD ADOPT AT QUITO CONFERENCE ON CUBA. I SAID I DID NOT KNOW.
HE SPECULATED ON THE REASON FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER'S ABSENCE
FROM THE MEETING AND THEN ANSWERED HIS OWN QUESTION BY
SAYING "I UNDERSTAND".

2. I TOLD THE MINISTER IN CONFIDENCE THAT SINCE I HAD NO KNOWLEDGE
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OF MY GOVT'S POSITION I COULD NOT EVEN SPECULATE AS TO WHAT OUR
ATTITUDE WOULD BE AT QUITO. HOWEVER, I COULD REPEAT TO HIM WHAT I

HAD TOLD SENATOR BYRD OF VIRGINIA WHEN HE DINED WITH ME LAST NIGHT; THAT IN MY PERSONAL JUDGMENT PERHAPS THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH MIGHT BE BEST ADVISED TO ABSTAIN ON THE VOTE AND THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH OF OUR GOVT WHOULD OVERHAUL EXISTING LEGISLATION WHICH MIGHT RAPIDLY PROVE OUTDATED. HERE I HAD MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY TO SENATOR BYRD OUR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1961 WHICH AUTOMATICALLY TERMINATES FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO GOVTS ENGAGED IN TRADE WITH CUBA.

3. SCHACHT SAID, AGAIN SPEAKING VERY CONFIDENTIALLY, THAT HE THOUGHT THE BEST COURSE FOR THE US AT QUITO WOULD BE TO ABSTAIN. WITHOUT EVEN CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF A US NEGATIVE VOTE, HE SAID "IF YOU PEOPLE VOTE AFFIRMATIVELY MANY OTHER GOVTS WILL FEEL EMBARRASSED BY THE INFERENCE THAT THEY WERE FOLLOWING A US LEAD."

4. IN GREAT CONFIDENCE THE MINISTER TOLD ME THAT HE HAD EARLY THIS MORNING BEEN ON THE PHONE WITH HIS AMBASSADOR IN BRASILIA. ACCORDING TO HIS ENVOY'S INFO THE BRAZILIANS MIGHT IN FACT BE TEMPTED TO VOTE AFFIRMATIVELY ON A MOTION TO GIVE FREEDOM OF ACTION TO OAS GOVTS RE CUBA IF THEY COULD FIND A FORMULA OF LANGUAGE WHICH WOULD MAKE IT "EASIER" FOR BRAZIL TO VOTE AFFIRMATIVELY THAN WHATEVER DRAFT RESOLUTION SEEMS TO BE ON THE BOARDS NOW.

5. SCHACHT ASKED ME IF I COULD LET HIM KNOW WHAT THE US VOTING POSTURE WOULD BE AT QUITO AND I REPLIED THAT I DOUBTED THAT I WOULD KNOW BEFORE THE DELEGATION ARRIVED. HOWEVER, IF I HAD ANY WORD I WOULD GLADLY COMMUNICATE IT TO HIM.

6. COMMENT. I THINK SCHACHT'S ATTITUDE IS SOUND: THAT HE WOULD WELCOME OUR ABSTENTION BUT NOT OUR NEGATIVE VOTE AND WOULD BE EMBARRASSED IF WE SURPRISINGLY VOTED IN THE "YES" COLUMN. IT IS OBVIOUS HE REGARDS BRAZIL AS THE KEY COUNTRY AND IF BRAZIL VOTES "YES" THE NEXT QUESTION WILL BE TO CONSIDER THE WAYS AND MEANS OF RECOGNIZING CASTRO. I SAID SO FAR AS WE WERE CONCERNED THAT WOULD PROBABLY POSE A PROBLEM FOR CASTRO.
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